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Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2013

[*on the report of the Second Committee (A/68/441/Add.1)*]

68/224. Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

The General Assembly,

Recalling the Istanbul Declaration[1] and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,[2] adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 65/280 of 17 June 2011, in which the Assembly called upon all the relevant stakeholders to commit to implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action,

Reaffirming the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action of overcoming the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries in order to eradicate poverty, achieve internationally agreed development goals and enable graduation from the least developed country category,

Recalling its resolutions 67/220 and 67/221 of 21 December 2012,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/46 of 26 July 2013 on the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,

Recalling further the outcome document of the special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals,[3]

Recalling General Assembly resolutions 59/209 of 20 December 2004 and 65/286 of 29 June 2011 on the importance of a smooth transition for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries, and reaffirming the aim of enabling half the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020,

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[1] *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011* (A/CONF.219/7), chap. I.

[2] Ibid., chap. II.

[3] Resolution 68/6.

Please recycle

Taking note of the ministerial declaration adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries, held in New York on 27 September 2013,[4]

Taking note also of the report of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, entitled "State of the least developed countries 2013",

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020[5] and on a technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries;[6]

2. *Expresses serious concern* that, after a decade of welcomed steady economic growth, the least developed countries are facing significant challenges in sustaining their economic growth and that their economies are estimated to have grown by 3.3 per cent in 2012, which is considerably below the target of 7 per cent per annum set out in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020;[2]

3. *Expresses concern* that the ongoing impact of the economic and financial crisis demonstrates the need for the deployment of appropriate regional and international in a timely and targeted manner to complement the efforts of the least developed countries aimed at building resilience in the face of economic shocks and mitigating their effects;

4. *Expresses its concern* that all countries, particularly the least developed countries, are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and are already experiencing increased impacts, including persistent drought and extreme weather events, sea-level rise, coastal erosion, glacial lake outburst floods and ocean acidification, which further threaten food security and efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development;

5. *Underscores* that the ownership, leadership and primary responsibility for development in the least developed countries rests with themselves, and also underscores that good governance, inclusiveness and transparency, as well as domestic resource mobilization, are central to the development process of the least developed countries and that these efforts need to be given concrete and substantial international support in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual accountability through renewed and strengthened global partnership;

6. *Calls upon* the least developed countries, their development partners, the United Nations system and all other actors to fully and effectively implement in a coordinated, coherent and expeditious manner the commitments made in the Istanbul Programme of Action in its eight priority areas, namely, productive capacity; agriculture, food security and rural development; trade; commodities; human and social development; multiple crises and other emerging challenges; mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building; and good governance at all levels, and in this regard calls upon the development partners and invites all organizations of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions and international and regional financial institutions, to provide, in accordance with their respective

[4] A/C.2/68/3.

[5] A/68/88-E/2013/81 and Corr.1.

[6] A/68/217.

mandates, enhanced, predictable and targeted substantive and technical support to the least developed countries;

7. *Calls upon* the least developed countries and their development partners to ensure enhanced focus on policies and means to address productive capacity-building, and in this respect encourages them to give priority to expanding the access of women, youth and the poor to factors of production such as employability skills, finance, technology and land;

8. *Stresses* that the least developed countries should receive a special focus throughout the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All (2014–2024), with a view to ensuring the realization of the objective of ensuring access to energy for all by 2030, as well as other energy goals and targets set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action, and requests that, in the Secretary-General's coordination of the Decade, within existing resources, the least developed countries should receive such special focus throughout, with a view to ensuring the successful realization of the Decade;

9. *Invites* the organizations of the United Nations system that have not yet done so to designate specific focal points or organizational units within their secretariat structures, with a view to ensuring consistent coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action at the agency level;

10. *Calls upon* the developing countries, guided by the spirit of solidarity and consistent with their capabilities, to provide support for the effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in mutually agreed areas of cooperation within the framework of South-South cooperation, which is a complement to but not a substitute for North-South cooperation;

11. *Invites* the private sector, civil society and foundations to contribute to the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in their respective areas of competence, in line with the national priorities of the least developed countries;

12. *Expresses concern* over the fall in official development assistance to the least developed countries by 2 per cent in real terms in 2011 and, according to preliminary estimates of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, a further decline in net bilateral official development assistance of 12.8 per cent in 2012,[7] while noting that official development assistance continues to be the largest source of external financing for the development of least developed countries and plays an important role in their development, and that progress has been made during the past decade in increasing the flow of official development assistance to least developed countries, underlines that the fulfilment of all official development assistance commitments is crucial, including the commitments by many developed countries to achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries by 2015, as well as the target of 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to the least developed countries, and urges developed countries that have not yet done so to fulfil their commitments for official development assistance to the least developed countries at the earliest possible time;

[7] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Aid to poor countries slips further as Governments tighten budgets", 3 April 2013.

13. *Recalls* the commitment, contained in the Istanbul Programme of Action, that donor countries should review their official development assistance commitments in 2015 and consider further enhancing the resources for the least developed countries, and invites donor countries to share with the General Assembly the results of such reviews at the earliest possible time as an input to the midterm review of the Istanbul Programme of Action;

14. *Expresses its serious concern* at the fact that the share of expenditure for the operational activities for development of the United Nations system in the least developed countries is declining, takes note of decisions 2012/1 of 3 February 2012 and 2012/28 of 10 September 2012 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, in which the Executive Board reiterated the allocation to least developed countries of a minimum of 60 per cent of its target for resource assignment from the core (TRAC-1) resources, and invites the governing bodies of other organizations of the United Nations development system and other multilateral organizations to prioritize allocations to least developed countries, as appropriate and in accordance with their respective mandates;

15. *Welcomes* steps to improve the effectiveness and quality of aid in the least developed countries, and underlines the need for enhancing the quality of aid by strengthening national ownership, alignment, harmonization, predictability, mutual accountability and transparency and results orientation;

16. *Stresses* the need for the international community to remain vigilant in monitoring the debt situation of the least developed countries and to continue to take effective measures, preferably within existing frameworks, when applicable, to address the debt problem of those countries, including through the cancellation of the multilateral and bilateral debt owed by the least developed countries to creditors, both public and private;

17. *Acknowledges* that trade has an important role in ensuring the sustainable economic development of the least developed countries and that the international trade architecture should continue to be supportive of and responsive to the special needs and priorities of the least developed countries;

18. *Reaffirms* the commitments made at the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization [8] relating to the least developed countries, and encourages developed countries, and developing countries declaring themselves in a position to do so, to take steps towards the goal of realizing the timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration;

19. *Underlines* the need to ensure the mutual accountability of the least developed countries and their development partners for delivering the commitments undertaken within the framework of the Istanbul Programme of Action, and requests the Secretary-General to report on the follow-up to paragraph 145 of the Istanbul Programme of Action regarding the steps taken to ensure mutual accountability;

20. *Also underlines* the need for giving particular attention to the issues and concerns of the least developed countries in all major United Nations conferences and processes;

[8] See A/C.2/56/7, annex.

21. *Reiterates its request* to the Secretary-General to include the issues of concern to the least developed countries in all relevant reports in the economic, social, environmental and related fields in order to support the implementation of the goals set out in the Istanbul Programme of Action;

22. *Expresses its concern* that, although the least developed countries have made some progress in social and human development, many of the goals and targets of the Millennium Development Goals have yet to be achieved, and calls upon the international community to give special priority to the least developed countries in order to accelerate the progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals in the least developed countries by 2015;

23. *Reaffirms* the commitment made by the international community in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",[9] to assist the least developed countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development, and also reaffirms the agreement to effectively implement the Istanbul Programme of Action and to fully integrate its priority areas into the framework for action contained in the outcome document, the broader implementation of which will contribute to the overarching goal of the Istanbul Programme of Action of enabling half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020;

24. *Decides* that the special needs and development priorities of the least developed countries, including the eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action, such as productive capacity-building, including through rapid development of infrastructure and energy, should be given appropriate consideration in the processes devoted to the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda;

25. *Notes with appreciation* the offer of Turkey to host a technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to the least developed countries under the auspices of the United Nations and in this regard:

(*a*) Requests the Secretary-General, on the basis of voluntary contributions, to constitute a high-level panel of experts drawn from the least developed countries and their development partners, the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders to carry out a feasibility study, with secretariat support provided, within existing resources, by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in order to examine its scope, functions, institutional linkage with the United Nations and organizational aspects, including by:

(i) Assessing the ability of a technology bank to promote scientific research and innovation and facilitate the diffusion and transfer of technologies to the least developed countries, on voluntary and mutually agreed terms and conditions, and with necessary protections for intellectual property;

(ii) Considering the current international institutional landscape, synergies and options for cooperation with relevant international technology initiatives, stakeholders and organizations, both within and outside the United Nations system, and the need to avoid duplication of efforts;

(iii) Examining and outlining potential functions, activities, working methods, governance mechanisms, staffing arrangements and costs for a

[9] Resolution 66/288, annex.

technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism, including possible regional centres in the least developed countries;

(iv) Examining options for facilitating the necessary voluntary financial support to a technology bank for its establishment and effective and sustained functioning;

(*b*) Also requests the Secretary-General to transmit the report and the recommendations of the high-level panel of experts to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session for its consideration, with a view to operationalizing a technology bank during its seventieth session, if so recommended by the panel;

26. *Notes with appreciation* that several least developed countries have expressed their intention to reach the status of graduation by 2020, invites them to start the preparations for their graduation and transition strategy, and requests all relevant organizations of the United Nations system, led by the Office of the High Representative, to extend necessary support in this regard, in a coordinated manner;

27. *Recognizes* that the activities relating to the least developed countries carried out within the Secretariat need to be further coordinated and consolidated in order to ensure effective monitoring and follow-up of the Istanbul Programme of Action, led by the Office of the High Representative, and to provide well-coordinated support to realizing the goal of enabling half of the least developed countries to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020;

28. *Takes note* of the work of the Inter-Agency Consultative Group for least developed countries led by the Office of the High Representative, reiterates its invitation to the Secretary-General to appropriately integrate it within the framework of the High-level Committee on Programmes of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, notes the steps taken by the Chief Executives Board and the High-level Committee in supporting coordination and follow-up of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action on a system-wide basis, also reiterates its invitation to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of the Chief Executives Board, to include implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in the agenda of the Board, and requests the Secretary-General to report on further progress made in this regard;

29. *Notes with appreciation* that the Office of the High Representative and the United Nations Development Group have issued operational guidelines for United Nations country teams operating in the least developed countries to follow up on the Istanbul Programme of Action at the country level, and requests the United Nations development system to ensure ongoing monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the guidelines;

30. *Strongly encourages* Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, major groups and other donors to contribute in a timely manner to the Trust Fund in Support of Activities Undertaken by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to support the implementation, follow-up and monitoring of the Istanbul Programme of Action and the participation of the representatives from the least developed countries in the annual review meeting on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action by the Economic and Social Council as well as in other relevant forums, and in this regard expresses its appreciation to those countries that have made voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund;

31. *Welcomes* the offer of the Government of Benin to host a ministerial conference on new partnerships for productive capacity-building in the least developed countries during the first half of 2014, and looks forward to its successful outcome;

32. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session a progress report on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 and on the implementation of the present resolution.

71st plenary meeting
20 December 2013